



## BETTY AND BARNEY HILL - ABDUCTION PIONEERS

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THE DEATH of Betty Hill on 17 October 2004, at the age of 85, makes us reconsider her role in the history of UFO abduction research. She was mourned by the UFO community as a true pioneer yet she never totally believed in the alien abductions of many of the 'experiencers' who came forward after her story became public in 1965. She was equally scathing of alien abduction researchers.

Betty was the one most interested in finding out more about her alien encounter, whilst Barney was inclined to dismiss it and sweep it under the carpet as a bad dream.

### Their UFO sighting

Determining whether the Hills actually saw something inexplicable in the sky in the first place, would add a lot of credence to their abduction story. If they had only seen a planet or aircraft then it would seem highly likely that their abduction was just a story created by their imaginations.

The only official investigation into the UFO was conducted by Major Paul W. Henderson who spoke to the Hills by telephone only a few hours after their encounter. It took Project Blue Book two years to produce a final report on their sighting. Dated 27 September 1963, it claimed that there was insufficient evidence to determine what caused their sighting. It guesses that they probably saw Jupiter or a similar 'natural' cause.

UFO researcher Robert Sheaffer agreed with Blue Book's opinion after he interviewed Betty Hill. He found that she was not able to provide a very reliable chart of the UFO in relation to the stars and planets visible at the time. She remembered seeing the bright UFO, the moon and a planet. Sheaffer calculated that she should have seen two bright planets and the moon, so by his reckoning the UFO was really Jupiter. It is not unusual for drivers to see stars or planets appearing to follow their car at night, and any moving clouds can intensify the view

that they are moving fast in the sky.

It's worth adding that in the fall of 1965 there was a spate of UFO sightings in the area of Exeter, New Hampshire. John Fuller spent a month interviewing witnesses who saw bright, flashing lights. The most notable case occurred in the early hours of 3 September when police patrolmen saw a group of lights at close range manoeuvre over a field. Many of the sightings were made near power lines, which made some consider that they were some form of plasma discharge. Robert Sheaffer claimed that most of the sightings were probably of Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. A criticism of Fuller's book about the sightings, *Incident at Exeter*, was that it dwelt on the reactions of the witnesses rather than on details of their sightings. (1, 2) The same criticism could be directed at his book *The Interrupted Journey*, that it merely assembles information without analysing it in much detail or putting it into a wider context.

### Radar

Betty Hill claims that at 2.14 a.m. on 20 September 1961, Pease Air Force Base picked up a UFO on radar and that they sent out two aircraft to investigate it. What the pilots saw, according to Betty, has remained classified ever since. (3)

A local newspaper reporter confirmed that UFOs had been tracked on radar that night, but he lost his notes and would not reveal the source of his information. The only real information we have about what Jacques Vallée claims is detection by military radar of the Hills' UFO is contained in the Blue Book file No. 100-1-61:

'During a casual conversation on 22 Sept 61 between Major Gardiner B. Reynolds, 100th B S DC01 and Captain Robert O. Daughaday, Commander 1917-2 AACCS DIT, Pease AFB, N.H., it was revealed that a strange incident occurred at 0214 local on 20 Sept. No importance was attached to the incident at the time.' (4)

We have to ask what they mean by a 'strange incident'? Was it just a strange blip on the screen or something more substantial? From the casual way this is reported it does not sound as if it was something that would cause them to scramble a couple of aircraft. Even if something was seen or tracked on radar it does not mean they tracked the same object that the Hills said they saw.

It would be great if any further files are ever released on this matter, but they either do not exist or they are firmly hidden away from public gaze. For now we can only say that any allegation that the Hills' UFO was tracked by radar is not backed up by any firm proof or evidence.

### Missing time

When they arrived home after the encounter both their watches had stopped running, so they were surprised to see that their kitchen clock gave the time as 5 a.m. Though, as we have noted, it was not until much later that they were fully aware that they had lost two hours of 'missing time'. Their watches never worked again.

Peter Rogerson notes that Barney estimated that they would have got home by 2 or 3 a.m. if they were travelling at an average of between 50 mph and 65 mph, depending on road conditions. He stopped to watch the UFO through binoculars, and they slowed down and stopped at other times to see the UFO, considerably cutting down his average speed. Furthermore, in his frame of mind he could well have taken a few detours, thus the so-called two hours of missing time could easily have been accounted for without recourse to an alien abduction scenario. (5)

Other researchers, including Jenny Randles, have also not found any evidence to prove that witnesses have actually missed any time at all. A matter of losing more than a few hours is very rare.

Peter Rogerson adds that whilst the Hill investigation was under way the

November 1962 issue of *Flying Saucers* magazine contained the story of Private Gerry Irwin who went AWOL and had periods of amnesia after witnessing a UFO (or aircraft) crash. Missing time, and an abduction featuring a medical examination that is uncovered through the use of hypnosis is also featured in a fictional story 'Control Somnambule' in the May 1962 issue of *Playboy*. Whether the Hills actually saw the latter is disputable but the concept of missing time was certainly prevalent. (6)

#### Auto effects

On the advice of a physicist who was the neighbour of Betty's sister, she tested the car for radiation with a compass. The compass needle seemed to move erratically over six, strange, shiny spots the size of a dollar on the car's trunk, but when Barney tried the same test the needle acted normally. Whatever the behaviour of the needle this would not be a method of detecting radiation.

Whether these spots were radioactive or not we must wonder how a flying saucer might have caused them. Perhaps they were created on the two occasions when they heard the strange beeping or buzzing sound coming from the trunk of their car? Perhaps the craft shot something at the trunk of the car which made the beeping sounds and left these spots? Furthermore, these sounds came when the Hills went into and out of a drowsy trance-like condition. If they encountered a spaceship then it would not be beyond its capabilities to be armed with this type of mind-controlling technology. Reinforcing this idea Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman in their book *The Unidentified* say that many contactees have reported a bee-buzzing sound that introduced and ended their encounters with space people. (7)

Martin Cannon tells of the experiences of a defence sub-contractor Rex Niles who came under psychoelectronic surveillance. There were 250 watts of microwaves (whatever that means) registered outside his home and underneath the dashboard of his car he found a radioactive disk. According to Cannon such disks are often used by clandestine services to act as a silent, cancer-inducing, killer. He speculates that the shiny spots on the Hills' car indicate that a radioactive or electromagnetic device was fixed to it. If the latter was

deployed it could have caused disorientating effects on the Hills and caused them to imagine their UFO encounter. (8)

A more mundane explanation is given by Karl Pflock who notes that when the Hills got home they found the lid of the trunk was not closed properly. This could have happened just before Barney's first close encounter with the UFO when he took a hand gun out of the car's trunk. In his panic stricken state he could easily have left the lid unlatched, thereby causing the strange sounds when the car roared away from Indian Head and when it hit a rough area of road a bit later on. Given the circumstances Pflock argues that anything out-of-the-ordinary, such as the loose trunk lid, would be regarded as something to do with the UFO. (9)

#### Dress code

After the encounter Barney found the strap of his binoculars broken. If his binoculars had a well-used strap it could easily have been pulled and broken by the traumatized Barney during the sighting of the UFO. The safety of his binoculars was after all the least of his problems. We might also ask why aliens would want to break the strap of his binoculars?

Following the encounter the tops of Barney's toe caps were found to be scuffed. This would substantiate his statement that he was dragged by his arms towards the landed UFO when he was abducted.

The dress Betty wore during the abduction was found to be covered in a pink powder. When this was shaken off it left pink stains behind. She also found the hem and seams torn. The patterned, purple dress has been kept in her closet and over the years she has cut sections off it to satisfy the requests of laboratories throughout the world. (10)

One study of the dress was initiated by Bill Konkolesky who on 16 July 2002, sent 3x4 cm sections of the fabric to the Pinelandia Biophysics Laboratory. They grew wheat seedlings in water samples soaked in sections of the dress that were stained and control samples that were not stained. They found that the wheat seedlings grown in the stained water grew much better. Their conclusion was that whatever stained the dress showed it could 'alter metabolic activity in a living organism.' The report warns that they do not know if the material on the dress

would have any impact on other living systems, and they could not assess if the many years of storage had changed the characteristics of the stains. (11) This, like other studies of the substance, leaves us with more questions than answers. So far no one has provided any evidence that it is of exceptional, let alone extraterrestrial, origin.

Strange stains have been found on abductees' bodies and bed clothes; keeping samples has proved difficult as these substances tend to evaporate or the traces are insufficient to make any form of adequate analysis possible. (12)

#### Return of the ear rings

Even weirder, Betty claims that six to eight weeks after their encounter they returned home to find a pile of leaves on their kitchen table. They had just been back to the mountains searching for the location of their abduction to see if it-triggered any memories. When cleaning up the mess she found the blue ear rings she had been wearing the night of the encounter. She quite reasonably wondered how she lost them and how they got in their home. From this we can presume there were no signs of a break-in. The problem with this story is that most accounts say they visited the mountains in the early part of 1962, and the earliest suggestion for them to make these trips was made on 25 November, 1961. The ear ring story would indicate that they searched for the location before the end of 1961. It is not surprising if Betty has got the time of this mixed up; what this indicated to her was that the aliens had stolen her ear rings and they knew where they lived. (13)

#### Telepathy

There is an ambiguity in the means of communication that was used during the Hill abduction. Barney seemed to think they spoke through their eyes in a telepathic manner. Their thoughts came into his head without them speaking. (14) They did have small mouths and spoke to each other in a gurgling humming fashion. (15) Betty said they used normal English speech. They did always have a full grasp of English and the concepts the words conveyed.

Generally the abductee hears inside their head or gets an impression of what the aliens want them to do. According to Jacobs there are no cases of an abduction

occurring that involved completely spoken communication. (16) Abductee 'Arthur' asserts that you have to eliminate your fear so that you can establish telepathic communication with the aliens. Negativity of any kind blocks communication. The aliens seem to be able to look inside our minds especially if the abductee stares into their eyes. (17)

### Writing

Budd Hopkins reveals that he keeps a secret file of the letters, numbers and symbols that abductees remember seeing inside UFOs. He terms them 'notational symbols', which are remarkably consistent in a wide range of abduction stories. So far he has not made the file public because he uses it to assess the genuineness of new abduction reports. (18)

It is not very difficult to find examples of alien writing; samples are given by George Adamski and the medium Hélène Smith who produced elaborate alien language and writing. Betty Andreasson saw a glowing book and Betty Hill gives a detailed description of an alien book containing curved and straight lined writing like Japanese. Like Flournoy, who investigated Smith's claims, it is difficult to determine whether these are the product of the person's imagination or not.

According to research by Leonard Keane, the star language by Betty Andreasson when under hypnosis, seems to be Gaelic. A translation of her speech is a warning that the descendents of the Northern peoples will suffer due to the mistakes of those in high places. This suggests that the aliens are more connected to our planet than to the stars. (19)

Since 1999 Gary Anthony has conducted an Alien Semiotics Project to use linguistic analysis to review claims of spoken and written alien language. They have not been impressed by the so-called alien origin of any of the material given them so far, but they are still looking. (20)

### The star map

Over a period of several years amateur astronomer Marjorie Fish worked to build a realistic model of the stars and lines depicted in the glowing 3-D Star Map seen on a flat TV-type screen by Betty Hill on board the flying saucer. She methodically collected information from

star catalogues and focused her search on stars that would be suitable and stable enough to enable life forms to evolve on planets orbiting them. She assumed that since they visited our Sun they probably originated from sun-like solar systems. There was also the assumption that they came from the stars shown at the bottom of the map and that one of the lines came from them to our Sun. After constructing models of star systems from beads hung on threads she found a sector of space with 12 sun-like planets that matched Betty's drawing of the alien's star map. Her work showed that they came from Zeta Reticuli 2 in the Reticulus constellation. She felt that her interpretation of the map, that was first presented in February 1973, could not be based on a hoax as it used data from catalogues and data that were not available until the late 1960s, well after the time when Betty drew her map. Fish's conclusion was that 'Betty's map could only have been drawn after contact with extraterrestrials.' (21)

At its simplest level critics have dismissed the Fish map since it includes non-sunlike stars that are regarded as background to the main stars that have lines indicating 'trading routes' between them. Astronomer Carl Sagan showed that if you took away the trading route lines then there was little similarity between the two maps. In his revised edition of *The Interrupted Journey* John Fuller has to admit that expert opinion of the map is divided. (22)

Astrophysicist and computer scientist Jacques Vallée is crushingly sceptical of the map. He accepts that a computer simulation by Walter Mitchell, an astronomy professor at Ohio State university, confirms the accuracy of Fish's model. For him, however, this is beside the point because the wrong question was asked. A better idea would have been to use the computer to process and calculate the possible viewpoints from outside our solar systems that might make better matches. Out of these potentially millions of viewpoints we could more accurately judge whether Zeta Reticuli 2 is the best fit. Whatever the outcome Vallée notes that Betty's map does not correspond to any type of scale or to the brightness of the stars. Warming to his main argument he wonders what use a map like this would be to the pilots of an advanced spacecraft. Since our own

rudimentary spacecraft use telemetry and software to navigate with he thinks the map was 'as ludicrous as a propeller or a rudder would have been.' (23) For these reasons Vallée thinks Betty was presented with this map to impress on us that the aliens are visitors from outer space, perhaps to divert our attention from other possibilities?

Another blow to the map came in 1980 when it was discovered that Zeta Reticuli 2 was a double star rather than a single star system. As a double system it would be less likely to support stable life forms as we know them, and would not have met Fish's original criteria for her model. Another objection is that if the aliens originated from this system they would have depicted it with two stars and not one. (24)

If Fish's map is wrong it puts doubt on other abduction stories that have since claimed their aliens came from Zeta Reticuli. Those who still have faith in Betty's original map have looked for other possible matches to it. Most ufologists who have taken up this challenge have looked for other star fields and systems whereas Joachim Koch thinks that the map is really of our own planetary system. He claims: 'Amazingly, we found out by pure astronomical analysis that the positions of the inner and middle planets and some of the major and very interesting planetoids (asteroids) in our planetary system one month around the time the abduction took place match completely the famous 'Betty Star Map' pattern.' (25) Stanton Friedman still sticks with Fish's map and thinks the selection of asteroids in Koch's map is arbitrary. I suspect Betty's star map and its possibilities will continue to be debated for a long time to come.

Abductee Virginia Horton mentions seeing holographic, colour-coded star maps during an abduction she recalled happening in 1950, (26) and way back during the British 1909 phantom airship scare two witnesses saw an airship containing a map. The two men were walking on Ham Common, London, on the night of 13 May, when they heard a buzzing sound and saw a 200-ft long airship on the ground in front of them. The occupants of the craft were a Yankee who kept shining a searchlight at them, and a German who asked for some tobacco for his pipe. According to their report, 'The German gentleman had a cap

and a beard and a map in front of him. It was fastened on a board and there were red discs on it, as though they had been stuck in the maps with pins.' Once the German was given some tobacco the ship left within ten seconds. (27, 28) In the manner this report was written it suggests it was a hoax, though it does seem reasonable to most of us that the crew of airships or flying saucers would require maps despite Vallée's objections.

### Physiological factors

Budd Hopkins points out that the aliens consistently take an interest in human heads, genitals and lower abdomen. They never take an interest in our most important organ - the heart. For him this shows that alien medical examinations and procedures are real and not the product of dreams, folklore or fantasy. (29) The abduction experience of the Hills confirms this viewpoint.

Barney Hill had neck pain, ulcers and various ailments that have been attributed to stress that had nothing to do with the encounter according to sceptics, or they were induced by the proximity he had to the alien flying saucer according to believers.

Betty thought that if they had seen an extraterrestrial spacecraft then they could have been exposed to some form of radioactivity or cosmic rays. For this reason when Barney unloaded the car she insisted that he put their belongings on the back porch for a couple of days. They also felt very dirty and had long showers to get rid of this feeling. Indeed, the concern about what the craft might have done to their health was the main reason why she reported their sighting to NICAP. (30)

Abductees are reported to find a wide range of scratches, scars and scoop marks all over their bodies when they wake up in the morning after an abduction. I can vividly remember a lecture given by Budd Hopkins in Sheffield, England, when he showed numerous slides of half-naked people showing off their markings.

One simple explanation is that they are self-inflicted. This does not mean that they have made these markings deliberately - they could be acquired in the process of experiencing a vivid nightmare or hallucination. The abductee could inflict such injuries or report other physiological symptoms if they were suffering from Munchausen's syndrome. (31)

Another factor is that during sleep all of us gain marks, lines or pains due to remaining in the same position during sleep. In the normal course of life we ignore them but abductees read them differently. A more exotic explanation is that the intense mental experience of the abduction causes a psychosomatic response. They are the equivalent of UFO or alien stigmata.

In 1978 a man in Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, had a dream about flying saucers, then found scratches on his arm that spelt out 'UFO'. A year later two young people dreamt about UFOs and found rashes on their legs and lower parts of their bodies. (32)

### Elusive evidence

Abductions never take place in public; they tend to be at night when the person is alone. As Jacobs puts it: 'The greater the victim's seclusion and the less others will miss her, the longer the experience tends to last.' (33) If there are other people present during the abduction they are 'switched off' by the aliens. If it is a bedroom encounter the person's partner will remain in a deep sleep, or if a UFO is spotted whilst riding in a car the driver might pull over and go to sleep or become unconscious. The targeted person will then be floated through the windscreen. When outdoors with a group of people the abductee will be inclined to walk away to where a UFO is landed and experience an abduction. To hide the time she is away from the group they are switched off until she returns. (34)

There are some abduction episodes that do involve more than one person, like the Betty and Barney Hill case. Unfortunately, they tend to involve close friends, family or partners. There tends to be a dominant abductee and a passive partner or friend; often only one of the abductees will consent to be hypnotised. Incidents with two or more abductees, who are taken together on the same flying saucer, always have them separated by the aliens so the abductees cannot recall in detail anything other than what happened to them. There are no reports of witnesses seeing landed flying saucers taking on board abductees, though several abductions have taken place where there has been UFO activity reported by independent witnesses.

It is intriguing that when Jacobs put a video camera in the bedroom of an

abductee who had virtually daily abductions they had very little success in capturing any images of the aliens. For days nothing happened, then she had an abduction experience late one morning at the very time when the video camera had stopped recording. Her next abduction came several weeks later; this avoided being recorded by the camera as it took place as she slept in her living room. Another abductee had a video camera installed in their bedroom, which obtained the same non-results. As they used the video system for other abductees they found that the equipment would suffer from malfunctions, or in one case an abductee saw aliens standing out of camera view telling her to switch off the camera, which she did. They used this equipment with six abductees and had similar problems. (35)

Chris Kenworthy tried the same video experiment with British abductees. He found that when his subjects reported being abducted the video tapes indicated that they were fast asleep in their beds. Two abductees were recorded getting out of bed and leaving the room which tallied with their recollection of an abduction at the same time. In both cases it looked as if they were sleep walking. (36) This would indicate that in these cases their abductions are caused by vivid dreams rather than by physical aliens. Although the number of people tested has been small, this could be a very fruitful means of establishing the reality of these experiences.

Attempts have been made to understand the seemingly magical technology of the aliens in scientific terms. Dr Richard D. Butler claims that during physical abductions abductees are tranquilised to prevent harm to themselves and to their abductors. He explains why abductees experience doorway amnesia and how the aliens are able to float people through solid objects:

'Subjects are transported via a small shuttle, lifting beam or direct transfer. Direct transfer utilizes a hyper-dimensional tunnel. It will appear as a large brilliant white energy gate. The subject steps through the gate and is instantly aboard the craft. Also reported is the nullification of the nuclear repulsive forces in solid objects. This allows the subject to physically pass through solid objects.' (37)

This is a great explanation if we can establish that the terminology of hyper-dimensional tunnels, nuclear repulsive

forces and energy gates is more than just science fiction speak. Another way of explaining the abduction experience is to say that abductees enter a different form of reality through an altered state of consciousness. The abduction experience is real but it is controlled by 'scientific' magic and in realities that we can barely understand. (38) Hard-line abductionists dismiss astral journeys and channelling but by acknowledging the ability of aliens to levitate, use telepathy, move through walls and become invisible they have accepted the encroachment of many paranormal factors into nuts and bolts ufology. As John Harney observes, physical beings should not be able to ignore the laws of physics; by accepting paranormal theories or happenings it is not 'necessary for any further thought or investigation. In other words, it is merely a form of intellectual laziness'. (39)

Besides working out the science or pseudoscience of their technology we must wonder why it is so incompetent. John Keel brought up this issue in *Operation Trojan Horse* where he wonders why the flying saucers are always crashing. Bits are always falling off them and they make their repairs near highways or near farms, rather than in isolated areas away from prying eyes. (40)

In terms of abductions we are told that abductees get an inclination to walk or drive to a certain location before they are walked, half-dragged or floated to a flying saucer. On return the person is left outside their home several yards from where they were originally abducted, or they wake in their beds the next morning to find they are wearing different clothing or it has been put on back-to-front. With technology that can float and transfer people through solid matter why don't they simply take and return people without all this elaborate ritual? If you can move through solid matter why do abductees report elaborate procedures to find a window to travel through, when others claim they have gone through walls and ceilings? Furthermore, the aliens are selective at covering up their activities. They can switch off people, create screen memories and elude video equipment, photography and radar yet they cannot fully block people's memories; they cannot put their clothes back on properly; they leave scratches and scars all over people's bodies (even though some abductees claim the aliens have fast acting

healing powers); their sophisticated implants drop out of people's bodies.

When John Keel looked at the UFO evidence in the early 1970s he found 'that flying saucers are not stable machines requiring fuel, maintenance, and logistical support...They are not permanent constructions of matter.' (41) In stark contrast, Budd Hopkins believes that abductions are what he calls real, event-level occurrences, that have provided a wealth of photographic, medical and physical evidence. (42) As we have seen there is no photographic or video evidence for alien abductions and other forms of evidence are based on anecdote or generalisations rather than hard facts or data.

When working on a UFO documentary, the NOVA programme producer was frustrated by the fact that abductionists dismissed or avoided the problems of supplying conventional evidence and instead pointed at the sincerity of the witnesses, the consistency of their stories, and the scale of the abduction phenomenon. (43)

David E. Pritchard notes that any artefact if it is to be convincing must have unusual performance, composition and structure which should be 'simple enough to be deduced, and yet impossible to duplicate naturally or in the lab.' As we know in the case of photographic evidence the pedigree of the artifact is one of the most important factors. When dealing with any form of evidence and alien artefacts we have to consider: Where and how was it found? Who found it? Who analysed it? Pritchard notes, 'It is the whole story, confirmed by the artefact, which will do the convincing; not the artefact by itself.' (44)

### Conclusion

The bottom line is that the main evidence for the Hill abduction comes from a combination of nightmares and accounts given under hypnotic regression. They came across as sincere and truthful people to everyone who interviewed and met them; though this was undermined by Betty's many subsequent claims of psychic events, and sightings of hundreds of UFOs many of which could be easily explained.

There are also several inconsistencies in their abduction story. They showed extreme anxiety when recounting the incident, yet Betty said to the 'leader'

alien as she was leaving the spaceship: 'This is the most wonderful experience of my life. I hope you'll come back. I got a lot of friends who would love to meet you.' (45) Other inconsistencies occur in the description of the aliens. Betty at first described them as having Jimmy Durante noses but this was dropped in later recollections. Barney said they communicated via some form of telepathy whilst Betty's aliens spoke to her in English. The aliens also seemed to have selected areas of knowledge and ignorance. For example, they were puzzled by Barney's false teeth yet had an otherwise good knowledge of human anatomy.

Martin Kottmeyer and Peter Rogerson in their many contributions to *Magonia* magazine have looked in detail at how science fiction films and television, UFO literature and beliefs, combined with the Hills' own psychological stresses and the 'mood' of the time (fears generated by the Cold War, atomic doom, civil unrest, the Space Race) all helped shape the Hill abduction experience.

To other ufologists such explanations are even more fanciful than the explanation that they met aliens from outer space or from another dimension. Whatever the theories and controversy, the Hill case has made a permanent impact on the way we perceive alien abductions.

### Further reading

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 43. "Where's the physical evidence? A letter from the producer", on the PBS website, March 1996, at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/aliens/wherephysyev.html>  
 44. Rima Laibow, Robert Solod and John Wilson (eds), *Anomalous Experiences & Trauma. Current Theoretical, Research and Clinical Perspectives. Proceedings of TREAT II, The Center for Treatment and Research of Experienced Anomalous Trauma*, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1992, 190  
 45. Peter Huston, op. cit.



## LITERARY CRITICISM

### Reviews by

### Peter Rogerson

**Sabina Magliocco, *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, £13.00**

This is perhaps a less broad study than the title suggests, being derived from the author's own observer/participant researches, chiefly in the San Francisco Bay area. Nevertheless it contains a fair amount of background material and critical history which should be of interest to any one interested in Wiccan and similar movements.

SM sees the beliefs of these groups as being founded on, at least in part, the extraordinary experiences of the members, both within the group and before joining. Several of these appear, as is often the case, to be produced by forms of guided imagery. Of perhaps more interest are the references to the idea of "autonomous imagination", a stream of imagery which operates outside conscious control and ordinary consciousness and which can merge in the form of dreams, waking, visions and trance experiences, and with which individuals can gain some kind of control through special training and techniques. Often this will join up with the personal imagination to produce hybrid experiences. SM also refers to David Hufford's view that extraordinary experiences are based on real "somatic experiences", rather than cultural beliefs.

## MAGONIA READERS' MEETINGS

If you live in or are visiting the London area you are welcome to attend our informal meetings, held on the first Sunday of each month at the Railway, opposite Putney station (South West Trains) and about 10 minutes' walk from East Putney station (District Line).

However, it is not apparent that any kind of clear separation between experience and culture is possible, and it would probably be better to think of a feedback system in which culture and experience are continually modifying and being modified by each other.

The movements shown here have generally mutated into fairly cuddly ecofriendly, feminist, politically concerned and politically correct groups whose actions are not of the nature to cause much offence, though there is still a tradition of oppositional culture. Some of this, particularly in its anti-Catholicism and harping on about the myth of the nine million has resonances with wider American traditions of the new land, set apart from the Europe of Popes and Kings.

A somewhat less edifying face is shown in the last chapter, which deals with the various forms of cultural property wars in which one group accuses others of stealing "their" culture, or portions thereof. This is particularly the case with various "Native American" groups who dislike the appropriation of shamanic techniques and sweat lodges by Europeans. However the politically incorrect might suspect that these "Native American beliefs" are every bit as modern recreations as any "Celtic" neopaganism or even today's social worker Christianity. Of course that doesn't mean that these religions are any less authentic than any other.

**Jan Harold Brunvand, *Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid: The Book of Scary Urban Legends*, W. W. Norton, 2004, \$13.95**

It would be nice to say that this book breaks new ground and presents fresh urban legends for the 21st century. Sadly it doesn't; what we get are the same old favourites, - you know - the hook, the phantom hitchhiker, the spider in the hairdo, the Mexican rat, etc., etc. There are variant tellings and often the history of the story is traced, but after a while these same old stories begin to pall.

It's not as if there are no new urban legends out there, 9/11 must have produced many, but only a handful of such stories are presented here. There are a variety of other tales which often fail to reach these anthologies; for example just the day before reading this, as I was eating in the pub I overheard a guy at the next table going on to his mates about how he

never eats at McDonalds because the profits go straight to the IRA, a tale which surfaced at the time of the Warrington bomb back in 1993.

Tales like the IRA funds McDonald's are stories which people actually believe in, and which are presented as really true. Does anyone really believe that the tale of the courting couple and the escaped maniac ever happened. Tales like this are surely falling from the world of urban legend into that of the sick joke or teenage scare story. On the other hand Brunvand is too quick to dismiss tales of people having serious crush injuries who will die if the crushing object is released, and are given mobile phones to ring home. Sadly people in serious accidents may well be kept alive only because the wreckage or whatever acts as a tourniquet. When released the victim faces double jeopardy of massive haemorrhage and/or their body becoming flooded by toxic chemicals from the crush injury.

**Greg Long, *The making of Bigfoot: The Inside Story*, foreword by Kal K. Korff, Prometheus, 2004, \$25.00**

In this fascinating book, Fortean and journalist Greg Long sets out to find the truth about the famous or infamous 1966 Patterson bigfoot film. Long does what few, if any, bigfoot hunters have done before him, search out and interview just about everyone who knew the film taker, Roger Patterson.

What emerges certainly from this research is that Patterson, who died of cancer in 1972, was what in Britain would be called a Jack the lad, or wide boy. A guy who never seemed actually to ever work, but was full of get rich schemes which never actually got him or anyone else rich, who had a habit of never paying his bills, and rather sponged off those around him.

What very probably emerges is that the famous film was a fake, indeed one of Patterson's companions, a guy called Bob Hieronimus ends up claiming to be the fellow who played the bigfoot, and a magician cum theatrical couturier, Philip Morris swears that he made the suit. There are all sorts of other discrepancies and the story, even without these claims, looks ever more ropy.

Of course, without employing teams of private detectives to double check every statement, it's not possible for a humble book reviewer to pronounce as to

the truth of all the claims made here, and the usual caveats have to be entered when dealing with 30+ year old "memories". Clearly some bigfoot hunters will be satisfied with nothing less than a smoking gorilla suit, and even then some will hang on to their belief to the bitter end. Indeed what emerges quite emphatically here is how little critical thinking some of the true believers actually employ; far too many take the classical mystic line that everything must be assumed to be mysterious and exotic unless someone can prove otherwise, and that anyone who tries to prove otherwise is a skeptibunker/pelicanist or whatever.

If, as seems very likely, Long has solved the Patterson film, then those who endorsed it are going to have some nice egg on their faces, and Grover Kranz in particular will join the long roster of academics who have been fooled by one of those yokels who couldn't possibly have had the nous to pull off a hoax capable of fooling the great professor. The lamentable history of psychical research shows just how common and how damaging this attitude is.

The cynical Magonia approach of when faced with a spectacular claim, assume a hoax unless someone can prove otherwise, seems very justified here. Of course just because a witness is not as obviously a fly boy as Patterson was, and there are no confessions, does not mean that the claim is genuine.

## EDITORIAL

Some of the most bizarre and the most controversial UFO reports come from Brazil. There is thus, at the time of writing this, mounting excitement at the announcement that the Brazilian military are planning to release some of their UFO files. According to prominent Brazilian ufologist A.J. Gevaerd, this is the result of a campaign called UFOs: Freedom of Information Now, and it will lead to a partnership between government officials and ufologists to investigate UFOs.

However, some of the more sober and cautious ufologists have been warning Gevaerd that the contents of the Brazilian official UFO files are unlikely to be any more exciting than those released by other countries.



## LETTER

A few matters arise out of Gareth J. Medway's "Still more about MJ-12" in Supplement 54.

Dr Roger Westcott did not pronounce on Hillenkoetter's signature on the first MJ-12 paper. This paper bears no signature. Westcott merely said, after examining other Hillenkoetter documents, that he saw no reason to doubt that all the papers (including MJ-12) were written by Hillenkoetter. I should add that the reason Dr Westcott was chosen (I think, by Bob Bletchman) to do this analysis was that, in addition to his high linguistic qualifications, he was known to have leanings towards matters paranormal. Stan Friedman, when referring to him, naturally emphasises the former whilst omitting any mention of the latter. The oddity here is that Westcott was not a believer in nuts and bolts UFOs. His analysis, in the end, proved nothing at all.

Gareth Medway mentions the alignment oddity in the date on the Truman memorandum. There is another, better, reason for the mis-alignment of numerals with the letters in the September 24, 1947 date. We must remember that the forger was working in the 1984-85 time frame. To achieve his aim he had to procure a vintage pre-1947 typewriter, with a typeface very similar to that used on other presidential documents of that

period (documents that he had already discovered during his archival researches). Very likely it was difficult to obtain such a machine, especially one in perfect condition. My surmise is that one or more of the numeric keys, probably the "2" and maybe the "4", were not working, and that therefore the forger had to lift the "24, 1947." from another document. But when pasting it down he offset it slightly. Notice how no numerics appear in the text of this memo, with 'Majestic Twelve' being typed, instead of 'Majestic-12'. From his researches the forger had already decided on the date he wanted, and in due course lifted the numeric part from a genuine Vannevar Bush memo of the same date. (He could not lift the *whole* date in this way because then the letters in "September", particularly the "t", would not have matched those in the text of the memo!) Anyone doubting if a forger would go to such lengths need only look at *The MJ-12 Documents, an Analytical Report*, by William L. Moore and Jaime Shandera (1990), page 53. The methodology is all too obvious.

There is a letter from Hillenkoetter to Dr Menzel, written in September 1963, in the CUFOS archives. In this letter he thanks Menzel for sending him a copy of *The World of Flying Saucers* (Menzel & Boyd, 1963). He addresses Menzel by surname and ends it signing himself as "R.H. Hillenkoetter". They hardly knew each other, although he had met Menzel once, at a dinner for former naval personnel, where they exchanged a few words. The story appears in *International UFO Reporter*, March/April 1995. Recently, a fake copy of this letter has been promoted on the website of Robert & Ryan Wood, both avid supporters of MJ-12. The text is the same, but on top of the letter is stamped the words "CIA COPY" in large print. There is, of course, not the slightest reason to suppose the CIA ever saw or needed a copy of the said letter.

As to motive, the forger was certainly not a sceptic. More likely a crashed saucer zealot who, frustrated by not locating any genuine Roswell documents during his researches, decided to do a try-on,

knowing he could fool most of the Roswell zealots part of the time and at least one of them (Stanton Friedman) almost all of the time. He possibly expected some financial profit but it was a risky business. In the end he made little or no money but had the satisfaction of seeing the papers get a brief period of high publicity in the national press, both in the US and the UK. He also brought a new concept (The Majestic Group) into the Roswell, and the whole UFO, legend. The next batch of phoney documents, from a different source, followed five years later and are still popping up from time to time. Majestic is here to stay.

**Christopher Allan**, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent

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## NOTES FOR AUTHORS

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Pictures are welcome, and these, if sent by e-mail, must be in the jpeg or gif formats. Do not send big files, as these cause problems on my old computer. Also, please do not embed pictures in the text; send them as separate files and list them and their captions at the end of your text.

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